

Janet Laurence: Aesthetics of Care.

In an age of ecological vulnerability, when climate change is a real threat to multiple species, a collective human hubris seems anachronistic. It must be time to put away false pride and reconsider conventional views of the world. If human authority is toppled and replaced by ontological equality and multiple agencies, where might eco-art fit into this new model? Perhaps under the umbrella of an aesthetics of careⁱ, which might help to slow down the disappearing act (extinction) of non-human and human species.

The question is not whether extinction is imminent but, instead, how our human to non-human relationships are changed by that threat, and how we might make further changes towards universal sympathies. Are animal/plant politics and their agencies affected by the threat of an end? How do artists make art and writers write about aesthetics under these changed ontological conditions? In some respects, art made as an aesthetics of cautionary care is an extension of *memento mori*, an art historical term popular in 16th and 17th century European painting, which utilized imagery such as a half-burned candle or human skull, to remind viewers that mortal life will surely end. However, a new aesthetics of care aims to move beyond the human-centred view and acknowledges all non-human species.

This point of aesthetic care is where cross-species might meet and agency becomes an expanded enactment.ⁱⁱ In Janet Laurence's eco-art installation *Fugitive*ⁱⁱⁱ, this is a reference to her simultaneous and proximate use of taxidermy (dead) animals, live footage from wildlife enclosures, animal foetuses in specimen jars and photographs taken from trap cameras in Aceh, Sumatra. As artist Janet Laurence says, her work is based on a 'place of healing, hope, breeding and care for our native animals. This ecological crisis demands us to shift our focus from a human-centred perspective to a broader multi-species, environmental approach, for how else are we to live ethically and find our place in this world.'^{iv}

Laurence's *Fugitive* is a collection of human/non-human objects and life/non-life elements or actions. It is part museology, part ecology, part alchemical disappearing act. By gathering these multiple elements together, it participates in discourses of non-human

agency and realities outside a singular human experience by considering the point of view of animals, even in death. *Fugitive* shines a light on problems of anthropocentric points-of-view, eco-politics, conceptual (and real) capture and systems of archiving nature in art. An eco-art aesthetics of care, realised in *Fugitive*, might reject judgement, in favour of a reappearance of life, through art. Laurence says, 'The genesis for *Fugitive* 2013 started with my Sherman Art Foundation project *After Eden* 2012. This was a type of Wunderkammer based on the idea of a natural history museum in our time of ecological crisis, paying particular attention to the plight of animals and their loss of habitat.'^{iv}

Sounds of silence.

Nowhere else is there such a cacophony of rowdiness as in the bush. Many people relish the idea of getting away from the noise and pollution of the city, and escaping to the peace and quiet of isolated nature. However, it's a noisy racket out there: squawks and shrieks, mewing and bawling, clicking and thrashing. All those sounds, of supposed silence, are an important element of a human perception of nature. What is really meant by a longing for the quiet of the bush (or forest or mountain), is the absence of human-made sound.

This yearning for noisy silence is two-fold. It establishes that human industry and commercialization are contrived sounds, even negative forces to be evaded. It also establishes an implicit desire to hear the voices of others, of allowing space for the noises of different species. There has been recent interest in works of art that incorporate the sounds of animals, insects^{vi}, the wind^{vii}, plants^{viii}, manure^{ix}, birds^x and geo-sounds. This is nature-noise, as art aesthetic. Janet Laurence's art work *Fugitive* is a participant in this growing movement of *umwelt* sounds; noises from the habitat. She has several video components in her large-scale multiple installation. One is a dingo howling in slowed time. The result is operatic: a lament. Laurence asks: how can we hear voices that are not human, and, what would sound be like when there is nothing and no one left to listen?^{xi}

These, then, are efforts to record the sounds of (not so quiet) silence, to give a voice to non-human species, some who thrive and others who are now endangered. This, too, falls under the category of an aesthetics of care. Laurence acknowledges the importance of nature's sounds: 'Nature itself is musical, composed of material notes. They play their

melody augmented and transformed through the melodies of other living and non-living things. Music becomes a model by which nature can be understood by dynamic polyphony.^{xii}

Elusive allure and its disappearance.

Janet Laurence's work incorporates environmental sound but is not exclusive to it. Her installation compilation is a gathering of objects, sourced from nature, from museums, her private collection and installed with the artist's transparent imaged glass sheets and perceptual art-documentation from her various field trips. Representation has conventionally been associated with a loss of the real. However, this paper is an argument for a remediation of the multiple real (memory and experience, real objects and sensual objects^{xiii}, emergent life forces), through the enactment of art.

The old chestnut, *things are born and then die*, has to be replaced with, *things emerge and then disappear*. This is not an occasion where two oppositional vectors collide in a correlational funk (human/world, good/bad, life/non-life). As Deleuze said, 'Aesthetics suffers from an agonising dualism.'^{xiv} Instead it is an instance of cause and effect, where something must happen, before we become conscious of it. We are most aware of life, once it is taken away. This is not just an encouragement to be aware of ecological annihilation, but an awareness to think outside the normal bias of human being in the world, and to consider the multitude of earth's inhabitants, as a plural conglomeration.

The 'disappearing act' elements of Laurence's work refer to the mode of things appearing from the heart of any given object, rather than from its legacy, its relations or its progenitors. A reappearance of a thing is a disruption in time (and a rejection of chronological time), a momentary lapse in consciousness, a sudden and unexpected vision of its real qualities^{xv}. Rather than a focus on presence, as posterior to absence, the reappearance is the act of transformation, from non-consciousness to consciousness. This might be closer to Heidegger's state of 'finding,' which he articulated in *Being and Time*^{xvi}, rather than a recovery of presence as a truth, in Deleuze's *Plato and Simulacrum*. Deleuze's instinct is to differentiate the thing from its image, to remove the essence from

the presence.^{xvii} However, this paper is instead a focus on the essence of the performative act of reappearing.

In relation to Laurence's *Fugitive*, it is important to stress the artist's act of filming, photographing, recording, gathering and then bumping-in to the gallery, installing the elements and creating an exhibition experience as an act of reappearance. This particular kind of reappearance is an experience of a time lapse, where the audience becomes aware there are ramifications in the past (memory) and the future (imagination) simultaneously. The experience is one where we are conscious of loss and renewal at the same time, in the gallery space.

Chasing the fugitive.

Laurence's *Fugitive* defies hegemonic values, and disrupts the hierarchies of knowledge by presenting different species, different media and different methodology as a unified whole. Hers is not a straightforward science nor straightforward museology. It is an artistic interpretation of both. It allows multiple equalized elements to act as one, but it is the yearning, at its heart, that creates the allure. Laurence says, 'Within the gallery space I want to bring us into contact with the life-world. With a focus on the animals and their loss, I think about the loneliness of the last one of a species. What was their death? I wonder about the *umvelt*, the unique world in which each species lives.'^{xviii} *Fugitive* works as a re-performance of original being, a conscious and tender iteration of the fragility of primordial life, through a memorialization of non-life. It is a form of psychogeophysics in that it explores the effects of the geographical place on the individual and extends those physical properties to spectral ecologies.^{xix} The artist's use of shadows and veils, which hang around smaller, enclosed sub-areas of the exhibition are a reminder of phenomenological perceptions of phantom or illusory appearances.^{xx} The actors (both human and non-human) generate a spectral trail, which is a deathly reminder of lives once lived.

If Laurence's work addresses the fight or flight problematic of compromised ecologies, a collective grief related to environmental devastation since the genesis of the Anthropocene, and a longing to re-connect with extinct species and past utopias, then she renders us all fugitives. Through her gentle touch, her melancholic arrangement of things,

projections of wildlife footage and animal imagery, we are all implicated in the earth's decline and we all yearn to hide from the horror we have reaped. In this way, she joins Belgian philosopher Isabelle Stengers in her wish to give the world the power to 'force' our thinking.^{xxi}

Eluding the subjective.

Cooling in the breeze of recent Speculative Realist and Object Oriented Ontology arguments, regarding post-finitude and the dualist separation of human from the world, thinkers such as sociologist Bruno Latour and quantum physicist and feminist theorist Karen Barad are producing a non-Cartesian ontology, whereby the human/world relation is removed from its central position. This is beneficial to a discussion of Laurence's work because nature/culture divides only serve to distance the two entities from one another and disallows a speculative view of being, from outside the anthropocentric.

If it is a mistake to see humans and the world as exclusive from one another, then it follows that it is a mistake to create distance between humans and non-humans too. This is philosophy at its best, when it helps us to overcome lazy habits of perception and staid experience, when it projects us out of our incessant human-centred behaviour and moral chatter. Laurence's multiple elements, such as live documentary footage, sometimes in negative format, and camera trap photographs of nocturnal animals, alongside emblems of past life such as museum-documented birds, create a merging of life and death, a mix of human interaction with the non-human. She says, her 'swollen, cellular forms which house various groups of objects and specimens including forensic glass lenses, images in transparent layers and films from both hidden cameras and from my research in wildlife sanctuaries. These film projections are altered and slowed and are juxtaposed with the lighting and shadows. I want to bring us into intimacy with these animals and to reveal our interconnection.'^{xxii}

Yet, is this interpretation of her work a return to distancing dyads. Is it no more than a reversion to correlationism, which speculative philosopher and author of *After Finitude*^{xxiii} Quentin Meillassoux warns us has become the dominant way of thinking since Kant? Well, Laurence avoids subjective authority or finitude, by creating a realm in between life and

non life, in between human and non-human. The categories are blurred by the artist, making the distinctions difficult. Whilst blurring the classifications or species might not, in itself, be helpful to achieve philosophical solutions^{xxiv}, it is helpful in disrupting our conventions of thought and raising new questions.

A question that comes to mind when thinking about *Fugitive* is this: if we must try to escape subjective anthropocentrism, how can we approach aesthetics at all? Aesthetics, rising up from the physical world, has tended to be a human-centred discipline, relying on perception to deliver normative or critical judgement on a given thing. However, art such as Laurence's has the capacity to make a deep cut in the impossibility of non-human aesthetics. She does this through a subtle shifting away from the limits of what we know (the agony of finite extinction), and by alluding to that which we can never understand. Her dead birds, skulls and taxidermy owls function as morbid and purgatorial reminders of finitude and afterwards. This is not just deathly finitude, but also the finite ability of humans to comprehend the world.

Subjective capture.

On this issue of evading subjectivism, Belgian philosopher of science, Isabelle Stengers warns against the 'grand refrain' of hailing scientific 'objectivity' as though it were a general norm, rather than a variant of subjectivity. She writes of 'those scientists who struggle against the undue authority of the objectivity argument but would not wish to become hostage of a debunking, ironist view that would demand that they (reflexively) accept that any scientific achievement is only a "human construction."^{xxv} So we can deduce that objectivity is compromised by the 'human culture' touch, and subjectivity is compromised by a need to consider the non-human view. What do we want? We want a view from outside the dyad. We want Laurence's creative, perceptual view.

Another phrase Stengers uses is 'resisting capture'^{xxvi}. Capture^{xxvii} refers to the capitalist hold or thrall of production over the populous. To speak of economic capture or capitalist exploitation as sorcery is a clever invention by Stengers, as it suggests the force of production and its associated allure. However it also positions sorcery (as forces of technology that mimic ancient forms of magic) as a force to be resisted. While Stengers'

usage is as potential capitalist malevolence, there might be another outcome: by placing the sorcerers back in the realm of sorcery, we might be able to resist the 'capture'. A resistance to sorcery, of which capture would be a symptom, might mean a spell of protection, a hope for transformation. So this is not a rejection of the demonic qualities of sorcery, as a power to subvert goodness by urging us to buy, buy, buy. Instead Stengers is suggesting a re-usage of sorcery, for the purpose of defying capitalist exploitations.

We might resist the allure of economic production, but can we resist the seduction of art? In the case of Laurence's installation, a magical resistance could be a protective caution or warning against the thunderous claps of nature's exploitation. A version of capitalist exploitation, the misuse of nature since the beginning of the Anthropocene (during industrialist late nineteenth century), marks a profiteering at the expense of the environment. This might fit into Stengers' model of capitalist woes.

Janet Laurence's work extends the significance of the word 'capture.' As well as illuminating the exploitation of the environment (and associated capitalist causes, such as razing forests for palm oil and disrupting habitats), capture also refers to the ambiguous role of wildlife sanctuaries, where Laurence takes much of her footage. Further to the irony of keeping endangered species in unnatural natural environments, in order to protect them, there are the equal efforts of artists to 'capture' these animals in their work. Capture is a term used by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* and refers to the state as having two poles: the magic-emperor and the jurist-priest-king. Capture has three apparatus, under the Deleuze/Guattari model: rent, profit and taxation.^{xxviii} I imagine our misuse and appropriation of the land is an example of capture. The violence and loss of species that has resulted from being 'bad renters' of the planet is inherent in Janet Laurence's work.

Unlike the violence of Deleuze/Guattari's state of capture or Stengers' sorcery of capture, where capitalism is the threat, Laurence's artistic capture is transformed into an enactment of retrieval and renewal. Hers is a sincere and tender absorption. She has visited wildlife sanctuaries and threatened habitats in Australia, Aceh, Sumatra, Chapas in Mexico, Kimberley three sites in Tasmania and the Barrier Reef. If Stengers warns against a grand refrain, where science is held up in a lofty and objective position, then art could benefit from the same cautionary warning. In other words, where science makes claim for

objectivity as a norm, art as aesthetic makes a claim for subjectivity as a norm. Both suffer the blows of being painfully and arrogantly anthropocentric. Both need to be avoided, however Stengers makes plain how difficult it is to disentangle productions of subjectivity and says, 'If productions of subjectivity cannot be disentangled from their milieu, ecology proposes that we do not think in terms of determination but in terms of entangling speculative questions.'^{xxix}

This of course is Janet Laurence's *raison d'être*: to speculate upon, and question, the world, in a context of post-finitude. This is experienced through her reversed or 'negative' photographic footage, her method of re-creating and re-performing as legacy, rather than complaint, memorial rather than dogma. Her use of slowed video sound also works intuitively. Slowness of art experience might slow production and therefore might slow the decline of the ecology, the decay of the fragile ecosystems, the loss of the species. By creating margins of life, where species interact and engage in a flat ontology of being, she also counters our habits of happy ignorance. This is Laurence's strength, her quiet spell. Her incantatory art is a hymn of despair and mourning.

Stengers sees capitalism as a system of sorcery, without sorcerers. She iterates the associated problem of using loaded metaphorical words such as sorcery, magic and spells in a political context. Anything 'other' must be supernatural, and therefore unreasoned, female and deranged. However, she says, 'we will affirm that our catch-all interpretations (symbolic effectiveness, suggestion, belief, metaphor and so on) are indeed capable of approaching the power and craft of thought and action at work in sorcery.'^{xxx}

A ruination.

Art, particularly an aesthetics of care, can be a remediation of the ruined: this is part of the reappearance enactment. Ruin is here meant as a reference to the physical decay of nature, the interruption to cycles wrought by the Anthropocene. Ruination also speculates upon abstract failures or defeats, such as the ability to create a new force or energetic creative object, out of the collapsed debris: 'Human and non-human life also persists in active sites of ruination.'^{xxxi} Out of hopelessness comes hope, from the impossible emerges the possible. Still, the dogged question remains: how does Laurence create a

restoration of life? At what time, at what place and how? What we mourn or what we nostalgically yearn for might not exist. Nevertheless we long for it, for that thing that has been lost.

Ecology and object oriented theorist Timothy Morton said, 'Nature appears when we lose it, and it's known as loss.'^{xxxii} We can only become conscious of a thing, once it is pushed away and then the distance is obliterated. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger wrote of "Entfernung" which is an increasing of spatial distance but also an elimination of it^{xxxiii}. A cautionary point here is that, it is a mistake to use spatial distance to increase a gap between human and the world, as that only exacerbates the finitude or human/world split. Instead, the idea of an increased (but simultaneously eliminated) distance might be useful to see more clearly, like a long-sighted myopic who needs to step back, in order for the object to shift into focus.

The idea of ruination and ecological loss relates to phenomenology philosopher Martin Heidegger's tool analysis, which also bears relevance to Laurence's work. Heidegger's notion of ready-to-hand^{xxxiv} refers to the utility and primordial purpose of a thing. In his tool analysis theory, it is only when something is broken, that it becomes present-at-hand^{xxxv} (perceived as it is; an observation of its facts). It is only when plants, species and habitats disappear, that we notice those things are worth remembering and coveting, even though it is too late. Humans are plagued by their fears of loss, finitude, death. We are comforted by reminders of lost things, aware that they might persevere, at least, in memory. In her shrouded medical tents, within her lifesized, light-cast specimen jars, Laurence places and projects animals and insects, skulls and foetuses, a litany of deathly life which emerge from our collective memories and appear as things which have new agential force and affect.

When force is enabled, new energy can sometimes emanate along tangential lines, even to spaces of narration. Janet Laurence's studio, in Sydney, is light-washed, diffused by gauzy curtains, and crammed full of beakers, old taxidermy (mostly birds), test tubes, sheets of painted/printed glass, cabinets, plant specimens, perspex boxes with boiling flasks, medical apparatus and bowls full of tiny bottles. There are hundreds of glass vials and shelves full of medicine equipment and plants clippings. Parts of older works, such as a hospital for sick plants, still linger in corners or on tables.

This is the place where a crossing-over of human/non-human species takes place, added to by her fertile imagination and her action (enactment) of that creative spirit. The force of her actions starts in the studio but then take effect in the gallery space. By active force, I am not just talking about intent or purpose of art. I am also talking about the agential force unleashed by the thing made, activated by the other entities that become part of the aggregate, such as the white walls of the space, the sounds from the video (and other works in the exhibition) and the visitors wandering here and there.

Together/apart.

The past emerges in the future. The idea of things coming together and apart, mentioned by Karen Barad in her essay on 'Nature's Queer Performativity'^{xxxvi} is connected to the way atoms are split but also it is connected to the way time plays perceptive tricks on us and the way we can become easily confused by events occurring at the same time. We are limited by our human inability to see multiple things at once. This marks an interesting change in a discussion of contemporary aesthetics because art has become multi-sensory, immersive and experiential. Gone are the days of standing in front of a framed painting and contemplating it in its entirety, in one gaze, using the sense of sight alone. Our perceptive experience, in that case, must be matched by an appropriate aesthetic response that takes into account these multiple elements.

The reason Karen Barad is so helpful in a discussion of Laurence's artwork, that deals with human ruination of nature and re-performances that might create a new emergent force, is that she warns against simply inverting humanism, in order to avoid anthropocentrism. She warns against blurring boundaries between human and non-human in an effort to equalize ontology.^{xxxvii} These cautions are also iterated by Donna Haraway's discussions of leaky distinctions between human, animal and machine. Haraway says, 'Movements for animal rights are not irrational denials of human uniqueness; they are clear-sighted recognition of connection across the discredited breach of nature and culture...the boundary between physical and non-physical is very imprecise for us.'^{xxxviii}

What is it that Barad is speaking of, with these cuts or distinctions? It is the force created from a cutting of things together-apart^{xxxix}. This is Barad's intra-action. This is matter, not just as outcome or effective product but as an agential factor.^{xi} The matter is there in the forceful enactment. The reason Barad's concept of intra-action is so exciting is because her quantum physics expertise develops into an exploratory elaboration of this idea into the realm of phenomenology. In other words, she sees phenomena as quantumly entangled, but this is not individual entities becoming entangled but where intra-acting components are inseparable or indivisible. Perhaps, the entities don't come together and become entangled, they already were entangled primordially.

This pre-existence of the elements or phenomena which are cut together and apart is important when thinking of Laurence's human and non-human relations, her ecologically sensitive approach to art, because she is creating artworks which have elements that already existed. By using objects that had a previous life, alongside footage of life occurring now, Laurence creates an intra-action of forceful enactment. These concepts are linked by a paradoxical perception, whereby our comprehension of a temporal reality is dependent on spatiality. Peter Sloterdijk addresses the way Heidegger's spatiality has been given only cursory attention and that it explains Dasein's embeddedness in the world.^{xii} He uses the phrase 'making-room' of space and this is a useful interpretation when thinking about Laurence's work because of the confined making-rooms she places within the gallery space. All things are in flux, and states of change. We rely on Laurence's creation of space for our temporal reality to be affected.

Through Laurence's references to science history (old laboratory glassware such as beakers, petrie dishes and flasks) and museology (bone matter and labelled birds), she adheres to an art methodology of documentary memory and time's in-between. Laurence works to create a tension between life and afterlife, being and non-being. Her shrouds or veils become the slender spaces between. She says, 'These specimens exist somewhere between the living and the dead. They have this incredible presence and yet they are long past. I'm intrigued by the tiny space between life and death, when the concept is infinite.'^{xlii}

The Disappearing Act.

In David Abram's book *Becoming Animal*, the author speaks of allowing perceptive phenomenological experience in nature, to facilitate a fully human mode of being^{xliii}. He writes of humans as 'becoming a two-legged animal, entirely a part of the animate world whose life swells within and unfolds all around us.' This, he says, is 'interbeing.'^{xliv} The sincere approach of this writer, whose language reminds me of transcendentalists Walt Whitman or Henry David Thoreau, emerges from a desire to re-connect with nature; he longs for meaningful encounters with other species as a means of becoming more real and to avoid the, 'habitual tendency to view the sensuous earth as a subordinate space.'^{xlv}

The reason Abram is mentioned here is threefold. First, Janet Laurence has been affected by his writings. Secondly, Isabelle Stengers mentions him in her 'Reclaiming Animism'^{xlvi} paper. Thirdly, his thesis attests to a desire to be reabsorbed by the natural environment, to disappear into it. So, if things can only appear to us, once they have disappeared, then it follows that a performativity within nature might assist this ability to see.

Performativity is essential to art enactments. If we use the concept of disappearance as a way of reconciling nature's fragile changes, then Janet Laurence's response to life and death, by recording, memorializing and re-performing its elements in nature, are a participation in that process of disappearing and reappearing. Her life's work has been a recreation of ecologies, with taxidermy, mazes for sick specimens, habitats for endangered species such as carnivorous quolls, or marsupial fetuses in specimen jars.

This disappearance marks loss, a memory that must be later recalled. Performance theorist Peggy Phelan, in her book *Unmarked* writes on the unreproducible nature of performance, and said, 'The document of a performance then is only a spur to memory, an encouragement of memory to become present.'^{xlvii} Is art (particularly that which comprises memorializations of life) no more and no less than a spur to memory? Or more likely, is art writing no more than its reminder? In the case of Laurence's work, perhaps our linked aim is to reproduce and re-record the habitats she recreates. Laurence documents nature's loss and this paper is a documentation of her documentation. This series of memorializations removes us from nature, with each step, but calls forth a new force, a new energy. That new force is the memory, but it is no more than a sleight-of-hand, because the system of nostalgia is flawed, the system of exploitation is unavoidable.

How can we be saved from this accusation of recorders, memorializers, commentators? Laurence is acquitted from any blame, due to her creative ability to coax out the subtleties, the in-between agency of things made. She doesn't pretend to preserve or save, only to draw attention to the fragility of Dasein, its tragic inability to comprehend and to the heart-braking act of watching the environment decline. As Phelan says, 'the act of writing towards disappearance, rather than the act of writing toward preservation, must remember that the after-effect of disappearance is the experience of objectivity itself.'^{xlviii}

Picnolepsy

Cultural theorist Paul Virilio, who writes about the erasure of the holocaust and the philosophy of speed (dromology), also writes about picnolepsy^{xlix}, which are moments of panicked lapses in consciousness. He questions the illusion of speed, within time, and discusses production of time and technological production of appearance. Virilio's ideas act as a caution to any slippage into describing 'the disappearing act' as a means of conjuring a false image, out of thin air. In other words, a discussion of Janet Laurence's work as a reappearance is not meant as a slippery trick but as an awareness of disrupted time, as a consciousness of the selective way we perceive the world.

Virilio's writings have been described as, 'the panic aesthetics of real time...Virilio foregrounds speed to extract the metaphoric potential of media technology, blurring materiality into engines of appearance and delirium.'ⁱ Delirium is an apt noun because there is a sense of histrionic urgency to Virilio's writings. Time speeding up and time slowing down. Performance theorist and Professor at UNSW Edward Scheer mentions Virilio when writing about artist Mike Parr's work. Parr makes work that could be described as durational aesthetics, where exhibition spaces are inhabited for lengths of time and perforated with moments of violence or shock. Scheer explains this manipulation of time is achieved through black-outs such as sleep, loss of consciousness and disappearance of the body.ⁱⁱ This is the disappearance of modes of embodiment, which of course are dependent on memory and expectation.

In relation to Janet Laurence's work, the systems of embodiment have shifted too. Plants and animal ecologies are broken or slowed down. We become conscious of time through

her work's ability to veil and simultaneously reveal. This is Merleau Ponty's visible/invisible act.^{lii} Whilst an object-oriented theorist would seek to avoid these limiting dyads or oppositions, it makes sense to side-step these concepts as oppositional arguments and offer them back up as causal effects. For things to be visible, they must first be invisible, for things to make sense, we must first embrace nonsense (or fiction or madness).

Human/animal inter-changeability.

The idea of extinction leads to the paradoxical relations we have with animals. The hierarchy, whereby humanity sits at the apical centre of the life kingdom, has been criticized as dubious. Ethics and morality have shifted towards a flat object-oriented ontology of equality, where all species might exist together. This is not an advocacy of removing difference or blurring boundaries. It is merely a reminder that, as our ecologies and environments change at devastating rates, we take pause to wonder at our human-centred hubris, our anthropocentric sense of self-importance.

By incorporating animals into art, redressing the imbalance or inequality between humans and animals, the issue of duty of care becomes part of Laurence's vision. This is not prescriptive preservation (although there is an inherent commentary on the idea of care) but, rather, there is an issue of interchangeability. Is it strange that we only see other beings as versions of humanity, through that inescapable anthropocentric lens? Karen Barad talks of the way we see ourselves not as part of nature but in nature. This, she says, is a claim to save ecologies and environments and animal agencies but might it be just another act of demonising and erasing? By seeing ourselves in nature, are we doing no more than anthropomorphizing animals and other wildlife? She explains how Heinrich Himmler^{liii}, Nazi SS officer, believed Jews to be lice, an infestation to be exterminated. When considering this attitude of erasure, Barad asks who has the power to erase?

Timothy Morton, an Object-Oriented Ontology philosopher and eco-theorist, writes of a way of being that might exist outside the anthropocentric. He strives for more concreteness of being and says nature gets in the way of proper ecological forms of philosophy, culture and art. When he asserts a need for an ecology without nature, we should read a mode of

being, without humans at its core. 'Art is not so much a space of positive qualities (eros), but of negative ones because it stops us from destroying things, if only for a moment.'^{liv}

The curtain falls.

When a performance is over, the actor disappears, without a trace. This antagonism between the presence (energy, immanence, agency, autonomy, vitality) of the recreated 'art thing' and the disappearance of physical animals and material habitats is what creates the artistic tension and attraction. There is a new force or power in the re-enacted or reappearing act of the artwork that addresses lost life. However, if we see 'life' as a lively performance of being, does it lessen that life to try to record or reproduce it? Is the artwork a simulcrum or a copy and less important than the original? Or has the artist, acting as mediator, transformed the original entity into a spell-binding new magic act, a sorcerer's conjuration?

This is a question of the ethics of documentation. If art functions as a documenting camera, how does the new form of art come alive? The arts have become increasingly drawn to performance, and this deepens our understanding of the problems of duration and disappearance. Rather than an ephemeral act, new media technologies such as iPhones and other recording devices relegate a new moving image life span for all forms of art. Janet Laurence uses camera traps for three to six months, where she buries the cameras and they take photos, based on sensory movement, into the night. In her *Umwelt* films, where certain video scenes are shot in negative format, there is a shift towards the slippery slope of the after life. These images become phantoms, spectral trails and they remind us of new life, even if it is non-life, even if it is after-life or after-finitude^{lv}

Rather than the performance or reappearance being inferior to the original, it is not difficult to argue that certain re-creations become so palpable they have a stronger relative force. As animals disappear, they can be re-enacted in a way that creates a new kind of vitality or immanence, this marks the trace of the disappearance. So, inherent in work such as Laurence's is the cause and the effect simultaneously. This Janus-faced view complements a OOO vision, where ancestral or ancient things might provide speculations for the future, as well as referring to life anterior to humanity.^{lvi}

Perhaps a reappearance is powerful because it is an ongoing act, escaping the death of normal performative, temporal structures. Sometimes we need a recreation, a re-enactment, so we can see the original. Disappearance becomes that re-enactment. Where is the real point of disappearance or erasure? It exists in the world but is addressed by art. This becomes the energetic reappearance. The moment where past and future collide, where lost is reunited with found. This impact creates a colliding force. For Janet Laurence the colliding force is the wish to hear the voices of other species: plants and animals. She named her installation for several reasons, one of which was the word fugitive's etymology of colours fading^{lvii}. If a colour is fugitive it will not last. Rather than being a word to summon an escape or running away, then, *Fugitive* is an acknowledgement of disappearance. The artist continuously mentions 'hope' because of her efforts to give succour,^{lviii} to regenerate the lives of plants and animals in creative and real ways. By giving a place for life and non-life, for human and non-human to exist side-by-side, Laurence provides an aesthetics of care. She may slow us down, at least for a short while, so that we can hear the voices of other species, trying to call out a warning.

ⁱ The title of a symposium at the University of Western Australia, as part of Biennale of Electronic Arts Perth 2002: <http://www.tca.uwa.edu.au> Accessed 28 december 2013.

ⁱⁱ Karen Barad, interview. In Rick Dolphijn and Iris Van der Tuin 'Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers: Interview with Karen Barad.' *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*. University of Michigan: Open Humanities Press 2012, 6

ⁱⁱⁱ Janet Laurence's art installation *Fugitive* 2013 was exhibited in 'Animate/Inanimate' Tarrawarra Museum of Art, curated by Victoria Lynn, 29 June-6 October 2013.

^{iv} Janet Laurence, artist statement. *Animate/Inanimate*, Tarrawarra Museum of Art, 2013.

^v Janet Laurence, artist statement. *Animate/Inanimate*, Tarrawarra Museum of Art, 2013.

^{vi} Miya Masaoka, artist, <http://www.miyamasaoka.com> Accessed 27 December 2013.

^{vii} Stephen Vitello, artist, <http://kaldorartprojects.org.au/project-archive/stephen-vitello-2010> Accessed 27 December 2013.

^{viii} Tom Zahuranec, artist, <http://www.psychobotany.com/projects/Tom%20Zahuranec.htm> Accessed 27 December 2013.

^{ix} Martin Howse, artist. <http://1010.co.uk/newinfo.pdf> Accessed 27 December 2013.

^x Perdita Phillips, artist, <http://www.perditaphillips.com/gallery/sound/> Accessed 27 December 2013.

^{xi} Interview with Janet Laurence, Sydney, 27 November 2013.

^{xii} Janet Laurence, artist statement. *Vanishing in the Umwelt*, 2010-12. www.janetlaurence.com

^{xiii} Real and sensual objects are discussed by Graham Harman: Graham Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* (Illinois: Open Court Publishing 2005), 169-264.

^{xiv} Gilles Deleuze and Rosalind Krauss (trans) 'Plato and the Simulacrum.' *October*, Vol. 27 (Winter, 1983), pp. 45-56 p51

^{xv} Harman qualities are real and sensual things intersecting within a real thing. Graham Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things* (Illinois: Open Court Publishing 2005), 169-264.

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^{xvii} Gilles Deleuze and Rosalind Krauss (trans), 'Plato and the Simulacrum' *October*, Vol. 27 (1983), 45-56.

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